

FOUNDATION WORK

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A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 7, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"And the king commanded and they brought great stones, costly stones,
and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house."
1 Kings 5:17.*

"THE king commanded"—that is the beginning of all. Holy zeal waits for the king's orders. But as soon as the command was given there was neither pause nor hesitation—"the king commanded and they brought." Oh, that it were always so in the church of God. That the King's commands were at once followed by His people's obedience! That obedience was true to every detail—"The king commanded and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones." They did not omit one particular, or deviate in the least degree. The advice of the Blessed Virgin to the servants at the marriage feast is our advice to all workers—"whatever He says unto you, do it." Work done without the Lord's command may be nothing more than mere will-worship, unacceptable with the Lord. Where the word of a king is, there is power, and you may expect that power to go forth with you when you go forth under the guidance and authority of the divine command.

Solomon began to build the temple at the foundation. You smile and wonder how he could have begun anywhere else. Ah, dear friends! I wish common sense ruled people in religion as well as in building temples. For many brethren begin their building at the top. To baptize an unbeliever on the ground of a faith which does not yet exist is laying the topstone before the foundation. To gather into church fellowship those who are not gathered to Christ is attempting to pile on the roof before there are any walls; for any of you to make a profession of religion without being born-again is building the third story before there is any basement. How much we have in this world of hanging up houses in the air!—I mean making professions without having anything upon which to base them. Begin with the foundation. The foundation, in this case, had to be carried to a great height, because the area upon which the temple stood was high above the valley. As there was not space enough on the mount, it was necessary to build up from the depth of the valley scores of feet in perpendicular height, to form a foundation upon which there would be sufficient space for the temple and its surroundings. Portions of the massive masonry which formed the foundation of the enlarged area remain, to be wondered at by all who gaze upon them. Solomon paid special care to the foundation.

Very much of foundation work is out of sight and the temptation is to pay but small attention to its finish. It was not so with Solomon. Although it was very much out of sight, the king took care that the underground portion of the temple should be worthy of the rest of the edifice—it was to be made of "great stones, costly stones and hewed stones." Builders in these days would think it absurd to spend time and labor in the hewing of stones which would never be seen; foundations may call for something firm and solid, but certainly for nothing costly and hewn with care. Out of sight, out of mind, and therefore none will spend time and trouble upon it. Not so the wise king engaged in the service of God! He paid great attention to underground work. And "great stones, costly stones and hewed stones," were brought at his command to form the foundation of the temple. He designed to make it all of a piece—it was to be as truly "magnificent" in its foundation as in its roof. There was to be no poverty of material, no skimping of any portion of the work. It was for God, and it was to be built by the king of Israel; and it would neither honor God nor the king to have a bad foundation.

I want, dear friends, to urge that all our work for God should be done thoroughly, and especially that part of it which lies lowest and is least observed of men. I shall first say this is God's method—He

builds all His works with good foundations. Secondly, this should be our method in all work for God. And, thirdly, this is a wise method. Briefly upon each, as the Holy Spirit shall help me.

I. First, THIS IS GOD'S METHOD. Wherever you turn your eyes upon the work of God, it is perfect. It will bear the keenest inspection. You may look at it from a distance with a telescope, or you may search it with a microscope. But you shall find no imperfection. The Lord's work is perfect, not merely on the surface but to its center. If you cut deep, or if you pull it to pieces, dividing atom from atom, you shall see the wisdom of God in the minutest particle.

Observe the work of creation. God took care that even in the material universe there should be a grand foundation for His noble edifice. We have the story of the fitting up of the world, during the seven days, for the habitation of man. But we have not the history of the creation of the earth before that time. To prepare for the seven days' rapid furnishing of the earth for man, millions of years may have elapsed. The foundation was laid with great care. No limit can be set to the period preceding the making of man, if you only follow the Word of God in Genesis. "In the beginning"—that was a long, long while ago—"God created the heaven and the earth." And during that process of creation it went through a great many stages, for God was determined that the house in which man should dwell should be thoroughly furnished for him. I cannot conduct you to the foundations of the earth. But I do ask you to go down with me into the cellar. Consider that vast deposit of salt for our comfort and health, and the mines of iron and other metals which lay the cornerstones of trade and commerce. Look at the store of coal laid up in the deep places for us. God would not send his child here in winter time and put no coal in the cellar for him. But He took long ages to provide the world with that fuel which is necessary for a thousand useful purposes. Those metals which are the best treasures of the soil are usually placed lowest by God. "In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His, also." If ever science shall be able to investigate below the crust of the globe into its fiery caldron, they will discover fresh wonders of God's power and wisdom. What benefit may be bestowed upon us even by the secret fires which burn and rage within the world's innermost heart, or what may be the blessing derived by us from these underlying fountains of water gathered in the deeps, we cannot estimate. Suffice it to say that God's creation is not only full of glory in its loftiest pinnacles but also in its utmost depths. God is the Master Builder and He lays the foundation well.

The same is true of God's work called providence. No event happens but He has planned it and ordained that a multitude of other events should precede or follow it. The doings of providence are threaded together, like pearls upon a string. There is a relation of this to that and of that to another. God does not allow events to blow about like scattered leaves in autumn—neither are they the inventions of a trying moment—when He is driven to fresh expedients that His end may not be frustrated. Events dovetail the one into the other. Every fact is fitted and adapted to take its place in the design of the great Architect. Certain great principles underlie all history. One who had but little spiritual knowledge, yet confessed that "there is a power abroad which makes for righteousness"—he could not help seeing that. And he might have seen more had he opened his eyes. There is, in the affairs of man, many a touch of God's own hand. History looks like tangled yarn. But when you and I shall see it disentangled, we shall wonder at the infinite wisdom, kindness, and goodness of God. Behold, in all things everything is of Him, and by Him, and through Him, to the praise of His glory. In God's government of the universe He makes sure of His foundation.

But we come into clearer light when we look at the Lord's greatest work of redemption. You and I are not saved haphazardly. It is not as though God had saved us on the spur of the moment, as an afterthought which was not in His first intent. No, redemption plays an essential part in the purposes of the Lord. I delight to look back upon the Lord's redeeming thoughts before all time and say of them, "These are ancient things." Long before the stars flew like sparks from the anvil of omnipotence, God had contrived the way for the redemption of His own. In the covenant council chamber, the divine Persons of the sacred Unity arranged the procedure of all-glorious grace. And today all things are worked according to the purpose of His eternal will. The foundation of redemption was securely laid in the covenant of grace, of which the Lord Jesus is the foundation. Infinite love, infallible wisdom, immutable faithfulness—all these combined to lay a foundation which can never be moved.

Go a little further, dear friends, and come to the day in which the Lord provided atonement for us and thus laid an immovable foundation. It has been suggested that He might have saved us, if He willed, without a sacrifice, letting law and justice stand on one side. This is after the manner of the men of the day—the jerry-building of the hour scorns so mean a thing as a foundation. But God does not build in this vile fashion. God will have no flaw in the salvation of His people, and that there never might arise a question as to the justice of the divine act by which their iniquity is passed over, He has exacted a penalty at the hand of their Surety. Now the Lord justly forgives their transgression. Justice, vindicated by a glorious sacrifice, brings for a foundation “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones.” All the angels of God might search all heaven in vain to find a fit foundation stone for the temple of grace. But when the Only-Begotten of the Father offered Himself without spot unto God, it was seen that He was in all respects fit to be the foundation of man’s redemption. He is a chief Cornerstone, elect, precious, able to bear all that can be laid upon Him. What a wonder it was that God would yield Him up to die, to be the basis of our hope! Talk of the great stones and costly stones of Solomon’s temple—they are not worthy to be mentioned in the same day as this chief Cornerstone, on which all the hopes of His elect are laid, for they behold in Him the sacrifice for sin, the destroyer of evil, and the reconciler of the lost. Glory be to God! In resting upon Jesus we do not build on the sand, but on a rock. He is the foundation of God, which stands sure. The whole temple of the church is sustained by Him!

When you are rejoicing in your sonship, your union to Christ, your high privileges, your eternal glory—do not forget the less visible but equally essential foundation blessings of eternal personal election, the everlasting covenant, the unchanging purpose and the infallible oath of God. Sing evermore of the love which from eternity was fixed upon you and of the purpose settled and established concerning you, for these lie at the foundation of all the favors you enjoy. Solomon’s foundations astonish beholders on earth, but those of God will fill angels with amazement throughout eternity.

Once more—while illustrating the truth that God’s method is to lay a good foundation, I must beg you to think of the application of redemption to the heart of everyone of the redeemed in personal salvation. Beloved, when God saved us, it was no superficial work—the building of His grace in our souls is no wooden shanty but a building which has foundations. Look back at the early dealings of God with you before you knew Him—He says, “I girded you, though you have not known Me.” Your experiences in your ungodly state were made to lay a foundation for the higher work of divine grace in your hearts. This was more fully seen in the operations of grace when God began to deal with you *effectually*. When He worked in you conviction of sin, what an out-digging there was! With some of us, the throwing out of the foundation lasted for years. And for myself, I began to think there never would be a trace of anything built up in my heart. What a trench was dug in my soul! Out went my supposed merits! What a heap of rubbish! Out went my knowledge, my good resolves, and my self-sufficiency! By-and-by, out went all my strength. When this out-digging was completed, the ditch was so deep that, when I went down into it, it seemed like my grave. Such a grief it was for me to know my own sinfulness, that it did not seem possible that this could help my building up in comfort and salvation. Yet so it is that if the Lord means to build high, He always digs deep. And if He means to give great grace, He gives deep consciousness of need of it. Our convictions of sin, though painful and humbling, are a necessary part of edification in righteousness. Since then we have been the subjects of a great deal of secret, unseen, underground work. The Lord has spent upon us a world of care.

My brothers and sisters, you would not like to unveil those great searching of heart of which you have been the subject. You have been honored in public. And, if so, you have had many a whipping behind the door lest you should glory in your flesh. Whenever God has filled your boat with fish and you have been more than ordinarily successful, that boat has begun to sink. Great mercies are great humblers of sincere souls. You have gone down in proportion as God has gone up with you. All those chastening, humbling and searching of heart have been a private laying of foundations for higher things. Yes and the Lord has done much more than this in His own unseen but effectual way. He has given instruction and revelation and sanctified fellowship and these have been your own and not another’s. No one has seen what the Lord has worked in you. But if it had not been for this, you could not have been built up in holiness and usefulness. Thank God He works the greater wonders of His love in the dark, out of sight.

Yet, as the foundation is the most important part of the building, so the secret, humbling processes of divine grace have a value second to none. Yes, my brethren, for the building up of a temple for His indwelling, the Lord “brings great stones, costly stones and hewed stones to lay the foundation of the house.”

II. I want now to see that THIS MUST BE OUR METHOD. We must build after this fashion and make sure of our foundations.

First, let it be so in the building up of our own life. Every man and woman here, but especially those who are young have a life to build up; it is a great thing to begin by believing good solid doctrine. Some people have believed twenty different gospels in as many years—how many more they will believe before they get to their journey’s end it would be difficult to predict. I thank God I never knew but one gospel. And I have been so perfectly satisfied with it that I do not want to know any other. Constant change of creed is sure loss. If a tree has to be taken up two or three times a year, you will not need to build a very large loft in which to store the apples. When people are always shifting their doctrinal principles, they are not likely to bring forth much fruit to the glory of God. It is good to begin with a firm hold upon those great fundamental doctrines which the Lord has taught in His word. Draw into their places in your belief and in your experience, those “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones” of sure revelation which lay the doctrinal foundation of the temple of faith.

It is a great blessing to have a deep, solid, inward experience. Beloved, never think that you have taken hold of a truth of God till it has taken hold of you. We do a great deal of flimsy work in religion, to our cost and injury. If much of our supposed experience were laid on the wall of our confidence, the first real stone that pressed on it would crumble it to sand. We want things solid, vital, real—“great stones, costly stones and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.”

Beloved, how much is done in private by every Christian who is really sanctified, in the matter of the mastering of sin? It is not fit, in cases of inward conflict, to open the door or the window and bid everybody come and see. If you have the wild beast of sin to tackle, shut the door and have it out alone. God helping you, you will never attain to a holy life unless there are secret conflicts with sin. There must also be hidden times of communion with God. That grace, which is artesian, is grace, indeed; when you have tapped the deep that lies under, up leaps the stream with an irresistible force, fresh from the very heart of truth. I pray God to deliver us from the present superficialities of religion. Xavier is said to have made innumerable converts in India by going about with a little pot of water and a brush and sprinkling them as he went along. If men do not in that way make converts now, I am afraid the work is not much deeper or more effectual. Unless men have new hearts and right spirits, it is all in vain that they make new professions. We need to be baptized into the grace of God till every part of our old nature is buried with Christ and the whole of our new nature is dyed in the color of almighty love. God grant it may be so! Be thorough. Be real, be intense, and in your building up of character, look well to the foundation.

So it must be, next, in the building up of a church, that a church of God needs be founded on the everlasting truth of God. There are numbers of hasty builders with wood, hay and stubble. But these neither attend to the foundation nor to material laid thereon. Splendid stuff for rapid construction is good, well-trussed hay! Bring a truss at a time. What a pile of building we will show in a day! You wanted a house and we have built you one in an instant. The wall is three feet thick and wonderfully warm. We have built a house in a day. In this way new sects and parties have been invented and called churches of Christ. Is this worth while? “Thus says the Lord, shall it prosper?” For my part, although I would be zealous in the service of my Lord, I had rather, by the grace of God, “lay great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones” upon the solid, rocky old doctrines of the gospel, than gather the greatest crowd, without faith and life. The stones of the temple were so squared and polished that you could not get a knife in between them when they were placed side by side. The stones thus adjusted were like a solid, united mass. So let us build. “Slow work,” you say. Yes, but it will be equally slow in coming down and that is the thing we must care about—we build for eternity.

To maintain solid truth you need solid people. Vital godliness is therefore to be aimed at. Twenty thousand people, all merely professing faith but having no energetic life, may not have divine grace enough among them to make twenty solid believers. Poor, sickly believers turn the church into an hospi-

tal, rather than a camp. Weak believers are poor stuff for building a church with. Alas, much has been done of late to promote the production of dwarfish Christians. The endeavor has been to increase breadth at the expense of depth. What would you think of those who should break the dams of our reservoirs to let the water spread over the country? The accident which did this in America has spread ruin throughout a great district. I fear that nothing but mischief can come of the present liberal regime which talks of universal fatherhood and virtually breaks down the separating wall which is meant to guard the church of God. If, in order to spread our sea, we make it very shallow and it spreads a noxious atmosphere and death over the plain, it will be a sorry exchange for life eternal. Oh, to have a church built up with the deep godliness of men who know the Lord in their very hearts and will seek to follow the Lamb wherever He goes! I look with great delight, although with much sorrow, upon our Society's church building in the Congo. When we think of the many men who have died there, it has indeed been true already that "great stones, costly stones and hewed stones" have been laid for a foundation. If God will enable His church to make such sacrifices, He means to build a fair palace for His glory. When the great demands of a work call for unusual consecration and unknown donors drop large sums into the treasury of the church, then there is hope of a grand building up. When Christian men, for the truth of God's sake can part with friends, lose popularity and involve themselves in loss, then are "great stones, costly stones and hewed stones" being built into the foundation of the temple of the Lord.

This morning a large number of friends are present who have been attending the Sunday school Convention. I welcome them heartily and I wish to turn my subject towards them, by saying—Dear friends, in the building up of character in others, we must mind that we do the foundation work well. Sunday school teachers are those who do the foundation work, for they begin first with young hearts, while they are tender and susceptible. It is a most important thing that we have our children and young people well instructed in the divine truth of God and soundly converted. If we tone down the gospel which we teach, under the notion of making it more suitable to children, we shall greatly err—we may make it more childish but we shall not make it more fit for children—nor a more effective instrument for their salvation. The same gospel which is preached in this great Tabernacle to this crowd is preached downstairs in our Sunday school to the young. And if I thought it were not so, I should despair of seeing any conversions. The lads and lasses want just the same truths of God as the adults; only it should be stated in simpler language, with more of parable and illustration. Fundamental truths of God are as much connected with the salvation of a child as with the salvation of a full-grown man. Christ receives adults, but He also suffers little children to come to Him. Let us always take good heed that our Sunday school teaching is as solidly truthful as our instruction of the church.

But be it never forgotten that the major part of teaching will lie in example! And, therefore, the life of the teacher must be of the very best. It is wonderful how children copy the conduct of a beloved teacher—for good or for evil—the force of example over the imitative faculty of youth is very great. When their hearts are tender they are molded for God and good things as much by what they see in our character as by what they hear from our lips. Most of you have seen in the British Museum the Egyptian brick which bears the mark of a dog's foot upon it. When it was as yet soft mud, a dog, who was wandering through the brickfield, set his signature upon it and there it stands—Dog of Nile—his mark. Any casual word or foolish act may make a mark on a child's character as indelible as the dog's signature. This may be done when we are not intending it. How much more when with our heart's intent we write upon a loving mind! An unhallowed remark, or an ill-advised act, may start a soul upon the line of destruction. As the Japanese copyist was very careful to imitate the crack in the plate, and the flaw in the design, so shall we find young people peculiarly apt to follow our faults and infirmities! Oh, for holy teachers and preachers! Let us be such that we may dare to bid our disciples mark us and have us for examples.

How surely are the impressions of our early days retained when later learning is forgotten! How easily may you who work upon the precious material of a young mind leave on it an undying record! I remember a man of God, who has now gone to his reward, who was the means of producing, under God, a library of useful lives. I do not mean books in paper but books in boots. Many young men were decided for the Lord by his means and became preachers, teachers, deacons and other workers. And no one

would wonder that it was so, if he knew the man who trained them. He was ready for every good word and work. But he gave special attention to his Bible class, in which he set forth the gospel with clearness and zeal. Whenever any of his young men left the country town in which he lived, he would be sure to have a parting interview. There was a wide-spreading oak down in the fields. And there he was likely to keep an early morning appointment with John, or Thomas, or William—and that appointment very much consisted of earnest pleadings with the Lord, that in going up to the great city the young man might be kept from sin and made useful. Under that tree several decided for the Savior. It was an impressive act and left its influence, for many men came, after many years, to see the spot made sacred by their teacher's prayers. We ought to be ingenious in our methods and spare no pains to influence young people for their good. "Great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones" may be fitly used in such building as this. If the Lord, by our means, prepares but one soul for eternal bliss, we shall not have lived in vain.

But, beloved friends, one of the most important things about dealing with children is that we teach them what we have *well prepared*. Their mental food must be carefully cooked. If ever a teacher goes to the class without preparing the lesson, the teaching is sure to be very poor work. Nobody sees you when you are preparing your lesson—nobody commends you for your diligent research. It is the public address which is noted. But the secret study is that to which the commendation really belongs. If this private preparation is neglected, it is a very serious omission. Indeed, bad work in places which are not looked at is a wretched order of things. Some time ago it fell to me, as executor, to arrange for the sale of the goods and effects in a house most elegantly furnished. Certain fine pictures were to go to Christy and Manson's. The drawing room was expensively adorned and the wall decorations were elaborate with a pattern in which gold stars were somewhat plentiful. When the paintings were taken down, I was not a little surprised to see that behind them the wall was bare of ornament, so that at no time could those pictures have been shifted without showing how the decoration had been stinted. The owner was rich. Yet his tradesman must have practiced such pinching economy of a little gilding. I am afraid if we were to take down the pictures in some Sunday school teachers and Christian ministers, there would be seen ugly patches of neglect. It should not be so, brethren, in the work of the Lord. It *must* not be so! Our power under God will lie very much in the heartiness of our private work.

Years ago, when I was suffering from gouty rheumatism, a gentleman sought an interview—he was confident that he could cure me almost immediately. He was a marvelously positive quack, and before long he had informed me that he had in his exclusive possession a most astounding medicine. I do not know whether a smell of it would not have cured all the ills of humanity. No, he could not even hint what the medicine was. And I did not press the point, for I could not expect to be favored with the golden secret. But I was indulged with some insight into the preparation of the miraculous drug. The professor said, "These pills are infallible in their effect, because they are so powerful. Their power does not lie in the mere ingredients, which are extremely simple, but their efficacy is the result of the careful preparation of the material by myself." Being a very healthy man and full of vigor, the professor professed to work up these pills in such a way that he transferred to them the electric or biological energies of his own personality! And thus he infused health into the sick. I have never taken the aforesaid pills. But I have used their author's assertion as a lesson. I believe that if preachers and teachers work into their lessons the life of their souls and the whole power of their minds, their teaching will be far more effectual for good than if they merely repeat good things and put no heart into them. See to it that your heart and soul is worked into your teaching. Next time we are studying the Scripture lessons, let us think to ourselves, "This is foundation work. No one will know how I have worked at it. But the Lord, whom I serve, will take note of all that I do, and He will be pleased with conscientious foundation work." Brothers and sisters, we must put "good stones, costly stones, and hewed stones" into the unseen part of our edifice, that, as a whole, our work may be meet for the thrice-holy Lord.

III. My time fails me. But under my third head I must carefully, though briefly, set forth the reasons why this should be done. IT IS A WISE METHOD.

First, because it is suitable for God; you build your temple for God and not for men—you should, therefore, make that part of the building good which will be seen by Him. And as He sees it all, it must be all of the best. The Lord sees the foundation just as much as He does the topstone—all things are na-

ked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Even heathens recognized this. A Grecian sculptor had to prepare an image of a god for one of the temples. He was working away with all his might at the back of the head and at the hinder garments of the figure. One said to him, "Your work is needless, for that part of the figure is to be built into the wall." "But," said the sculptor, "the gods can see in the wall. This is for the gods, and not for men." Let us catch the spirit of the heathen artist and do work for God in a manner fit for the Omniscient. It is meet that the foundation which is invisible should be perfect, if we expect the Invisible God to accept it; for otherwise, if we spend our strength on what is seen by *men*, it will be pretty evident that we, after all, are working for the praise of man, and not for the glory of God.

Next, look well to the foundation that is out of sight, for your own sake. No builder can afford to be negligent over the unseen part of a building. For it would involve a serious injury to his character. The very act of skimping is mean and degrading and lowers a man's tone. I do not care who he is, if he habitually trifles over that which is not seen, the habit will defile his sincerity in other respects and lead him to practical hypocrisy in religious concerns. The bare idea that we need not do our best if we are not seen is debasing to the soul. Today many aim at doing things cheaply, getting through work as fast as possible and making a great show for the money. Let us avoid this popular form of lying! Let us do every part of our work as becomes men who are elect of God, redeemed by precious blood and called into fellowship with Christ by the Holy Spirit. What if a sham might pass acceptable with other men, yet it must not be adopted by those who are of the heaven-born race and have a quickened conscience within their bosom. "Why," says one, "nobody would respect you any the less if you did such work slightly, for everybody else would do so." Listen—I should respect myself less if I skimmed my work, and I set a great value upon my own respect of myself. What if another esteems me? I am still wretched if I know that he is mistaken and I have not the approbation of my own conscience. A conscience void of offense, both towards God and towards men, is of more worth than the applause of nations.

Further, lay the foundation well and look to that part which is out of sight, because in this way you will secure the superstructure. There was a bit of a flaw in the foundation but nobody saw it—the builder covered it up very quickly and ran up the whole concern as quickly as possible. The walls were built and built well. It seemed clear that the fault down below was of no consequence whatever. And as it had a little cheapened the underground construction, was it not so much the better? How long was this the case? Well, the next year nothing happened—a longer time passed away and then an ugly crack came down the wall. Had there been an earthquake? No, there was no earthquake. Perhaps a cyclone had beaten upon the work? No, there was no cyclone—the weather was the same as usual. What was the cause of that gaping space which marred the beauty of the building and threatened to bring it down? It was that blunder long ago—that underground neglect produced the terrible mischief above—which to correct would involve a great expense and perhaps render it necessary to take the whole building down. That which was out of sight did not always remain out of mind. It only needed time to produce a dangerous settlement. If certain men of our acquaintance had been soundly converted at the first, backsliding and apostasy would not have followed, to our shame and grief. If certain preachers had done their work in the church of God better in years now past, those sad departures from the truth of God, which now vex the saints, would not have occurred. If today you do not teach your children the gospel fully and clearly, the evil may not be seen in your present classes, or possibly even in this *generation*—but children's children will bear the impression of the slight work done at this hour. Years may be needed for the development of the full result of a false doctrine.

Besides dear friends, to lay a good foundation on Solomon's part, was the way to save himself from future fears. Buildings which have to hold a crowd endure seasons of test and trial. Years ago, I was preaching in a building which was exceedingly crowded and, to my apprehension, there was a continuous tremor. I grew so anxious that I said to a friend, who understood such matters, "Go downstairs and see whether this building is really safe, for it seems hardly able to bear the weight of this crowd." When he returned he looked anxious but gave me no answer. The service ended quietly and then he said, "I am so glad that everything has gone off safely. I do not think you should ever preach here again, for it is a very frail affair. But I thought that if I frightened you there would be more risk in a panic than in letting

the service go on.” Solomon had built with “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones.” And therefore, when the vast multitudes came together around the temple, it never occurred to him to fear that the great weight of people might cause a subsidence of the foundation. Oh, no! He stood there and prayed to God with collected mind, altogether undisturbed by any apprehension of possible disaster. He that builds well for eternity will escape a thousand fears. Doubts and fears are often born of a knowledge that something has been left undone, or has been done poorly in the process of building upon Christ. Beloved members of this church, you that are often subject to doubts and fears, do you not think that these might be cured by a more real faith and truer dealings with God? Are you lax as to your private study of the word, or negligent in your secret prayers? If so, I do not wonder that you have doubts. Here is a suggestion as to the way of curing and preventing them. Make your religion *solid* work—have no more of it in appearance than you have in reality. Get down to the rock every time. Do nothing with careless superficiality. If you pray, plead with your whole heart. If you hear the Word, put your very soul into it. Let your Motto be, “Sure work for eternity!” Specially look well to the underground and unseen parts of Godliness and so shall your comfort be constant and joyful.

Beloved, lastly, do look well to the foundation and to the secret parts of your dealings with God, because there is a fire coming which will try all things. “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire. And the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” No matter where we build, or how we build, the fire will come upon all the works of man. The wood, hay and stubble builders cry, “Do not bring any fire here! The proposal is horrible!” But in vain do they protest, for God has determined that the fire shall be. Now, even should you build the upper and visible part of your life with stone, it will not avail if the under portion is of hay. The fire will bring it all down. What a blaze! What a blaze! Stand far off and see the smoke go up like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. What is left? Only a handful of black ashes! Is this the whole remaining result of an entire life? Is this the substance of a life of notoriety and publicity and honor? How terrible! Yet if the foundation part of your life is of consumable material that must be the bitter end. God be thanked, the man that builds on the rock, Christ Jesus, and builds on Him gold, silver and precious stones, has no cause to fear the last conflagration. Today he weeps, because he has built so little. “O Lord,” says he, “I wish I could have done a thousand times as much for You!” But after the fire has gone through it, and what is built remains, how thankful he will be! See how it shines amid the fire! The flames give it a glow and burnish never seen before. The rust and the tarnish are gone and the whole fabric shines like the pure gold which it really is. Its precious stones are even more brilliant than before, and in nothing has the structure suffered loss. The Lord be praised!

A life well-grounded in Christ Jesus, made sound throughout by the power of the Spirit, will bear to be inspected of God, and even to be inspected by the envious eyes of men, who would gladly find fault with it. And at last it will bear the trial of the Judgment Day, and will be found to the praise and glory of God forever and ever. Therefore, see to it that you lay the foundation of all your religion with “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones,” that so it may last forever.

To those of you who are not converted, let this be the final word of my sermon—build on God’s foundation, build on Christ—the sacrifice appointed of the Lord for the putting away of sin. And see to it that with sincere repentance, childlike faith, and gospel holiness you build thereon “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones,” which shall lie firmly on the One Foundation and never be removed, world without end. Amen.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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